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# The Women, Water and Sanitation Crisis and the Role of the Transnational Corporation: An Evaluation of Initiatives, Incentives and Impacts

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## **Abstract**

Throughout much of the developing world, women lack access to water and sanitation. This means that women cannot work or attend school, are at higher risk of assault and illness and must care for family members sickened from disease-carrying water. This crisis will only worsen due to increasing water scarcity from population growth, climate change and coming water conflicts. Trans-national companies (TNCs) are in a unique position to provide women water and sanitation (WW&S) access through investment in social enterprises, addressing and mitigating gendered negative impacts, corporate social responsibility and sustainable management (CSR) programs and governance and stakeholder management initiatives. They have much to gain: investing in water and sanitation access can improve productivity of the work force, create better stakeholder relationships and develop new markets. This paper briefly surveys the available literature on WW&S, and then examines how transnational corporations negatively and positively affect WW&S through real and conceptual examples in corporate social responsibility, investment in social enterprise and governance strategies.

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## Acronyms and Definitions

NGO.....Non-governmental organization  
TNC.....Trans-national corporations  
WASH.....Water, Sanitation and Hygiene  
WW&S.....Women, Water and Sanitation

**Definitions and Limitations:** For the purposes of this paper, the idea of "women, water and sanitation" (WW&S) particularly pertains to the special impacts on women from a lack of water, sanitation and hygiene. WW&S issues are defined further in the next section. This paper does not wish to suggest that WW&S issues are easily solvable; often there are larger historical, logistical and cultural contexts at play that prevent equitable access and gender mainstreaming in water and sanitation management. The author believes many of these issues are solvable (with extensive time, research and funding); however, frameworks for solving these issues are outside the scope of this paper. Additionally, while this paper

uses examples from multi-national and trans-national corporations addressing WW&S, evaluating the effectiveness of these programs is also outside the scope of this paper.

Additional caveats must be pointed out, namely, that providing better access to water and sanitation for women is not a panacea; women may still not be able to access education or fairly paid and dignified work; they may be subject to workplace discrimination; they may still spend the same amount of time fetching more water, and so on (UNDAW 2005). Moreover, initiatives only focusing on one aspect of development often fail. People have a variety of needs – adequate shelter, health, jobs, etc. – that are all valuable and necessary aspects of development. However, well-designed, participatory water and sanitation initiatives will help reduce disease and water portage loads and when combined with education and other development initiatives, can allow women to fully realize their rights. Water and sanitation are important first steps for development and achieving the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

A further note is that many corporations, multi-stakeholder initiatives and agencies are interested in gender mainstreaming and closing the gender gap. There are also many corporations, multi-stakeholder initiatives and agencies that are interested in sustainable and equitable water management. While women and water is a topic that has increasing focus, there is still a gap between those interested in gender mainstreaming and those interested in sustainable and equitable use of water. More research is needed, especially with data gathering, tracking and monitoring. Many of the corporate initiatives that do address something in the women-water-sanitation nexus do not collect data or make it public. Many of the water multi-stakeholder initiatives do not include gender in their targets (this topic will be addressed in a future paper). Thus, there is an issue of tracking what is happening on the ground, which means this paper is not an exhaustive survey.

Lastly, a note on terms: Transnational corporations (TNCs) and multi-national corporations (MNCs) refer to corporations with international operations in production and services. A traditional view is that MNCs are headquartered in one country, while TNCs have offices in many countries but oftentimes the terms are used interchangeably. For the purposes of this paper, there is no difference made between MNCs and TNCs, and so 'corporations' and 'TNCs' are the terms used to refer to the international corporation.

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## Introduction to Women, Water and Sanitation

*"The water and sanitation crisis affects billions of people every day, but the impact on women and girls is particularly devastating. Supporting initiatives that promote access to water for women and girls is a building block for community health with a ripple effect on social and economic empowerment. This is a win-win for everyone."*

- Muhtar Kent, Chairman and CEO of The Coca-Cola Company

Globally, women are systematically excluded from decision-making processes on water and sanitation despite being the most affected by it (National Network of Environments and Women's Health 2009). Lack of water and sanitation access disproportionately affects women; they are responsible for collecting water, have particular needs for sanitation<sup>3</sup> and often are caretakers for family members sickened by unsafe water. The burden is large: the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates women and children in Africa spend 40 billion hours collecting water each year (Wodon and Blackden 2006).

The cost of girls and women missing school or work creates an economic toll on not just women, but the entire community from stymied development and wasted aid resources. On the individual scale, analysis of Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) data found that each additional year of school can increase a girl's income by 10 to 20 percent (Plan UK 2009). Regionally, a 2007 United Nations Social and Economic Survey of Asia and the Pacific found that the region's barriers to female employment cost society up to \$47 billion a year (Plan UK 2009).

It is not surprising then that Klasen and Lamanna (2008) found that gender inequality in education and employment can cause a significant lag in achieved economic growth. Excluding women from water and sanitation decisions may lead to further economic stalling through wasted aid and philanthropy resources, if the exclusion leads to poor siting of taps and latrines or inappropriate selection of water and sanitation technology. Brittany Young, founder and president of the water charity A Spring of Hope, told a story in a 2011 presentation that illustrates the point. She spoke

1Target 7b of the MDGs is to halve the global population without access to water and sanitation by 2015. This goal may have been met for drinking water but will almost certainly not be met for sanitation (UN 2011). The UN says that the MDG has been met. Critics argue that while access has increased, the quality of water accessed in many cases is still dubious due to improper success indicators, meaning that the target is unmet (Onda, LoBuglio and Bartram 2012).

2The UN declared water and sanitation a human right in 2010. Morrison and Shulte (2010) prepared a white paper discussion on corporations' concerns in attempting to recognize this right; corporations interested in this topic should see this paper and additional materials from the CEO Water Mandate.

3In a site-visit in Sri Lanka, I talked to schoolteachers and children who explained that without toilets, girls would drop out of school at puberty. Other problems arising from the lack of sanitation is safety; for example, women in slums in India will wait for the privacy of darkness to go to the bathroom which leaves them vulnerable to rape and assault. This factor is particularly pertinent in conflict-zones.

4For a more thorough discussion of the benefits both to women and communities from including women in WASH, please see Fisher, Julie. 2006. "For Her It's the Big Issue: Putting Women at the Centre of Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene." Freely available for download at <http://www.genderandwater.org/page/5124>.

about a broken carousel water pump that was installed in a village they work in. The women and children explained they had quickly tired of the tedious and labor-intensive "play" required to pump the water. The parts were not replaceable locally and when the carousel fell in disrepair, it was not able to be fixed. Gender mainstreaming in upstream development decisions can help alleviate this kind of waste and lead to more efficient aid investment. The gains could be large: as much as 10 percent of the global disease burden could be alleviated through investing in water and sanitation (Prüss-Ustün et. al 2008).

The water and sanitation access crisis blocks women and children around the world from realizing their rights. This issue will only escalate in importance because without intervention, the burden of water collection and lack of sanitation on women may only worsen due to increasing water scarcity from population growth, climate change impacts and conflicts over water. As water becomes more scarce, women are forced to spend more hours collecting, and protecting the water supply from pollution becomes more important. The scarcity threatens peace as well. A U.S. report on global water security predicts that water will cause instability and conflict over the next twenty years (National Intelligence Council 2012). Conflict worsens access problems. An increased risk of sexual violence during conflicts means that collecting water and accessing sanitation are even more perilous for women. During conflicts, many are forced to move into refugee camps that are often fraught with poor sanitation and water.

While the body of WW&S academic and practitioner literature is still relatively small, what does exist shows a clear link between WW&S access and economic development and increased quality of life.<sup>4</sup> When women are included in water management, there is an increase in their health, dignity and security (UNIFEM 2008-9; World Water Council 2010). This benefit extends to the community; women-led community councils are more likely to invest in public goods like water and sanitation (Caiazza and Barrett 2003; Kabeer 2003). Community water and sanitation projects managed with women's



School in Sri Lanka Photo Credit: Caroline D'Angelo





participation have been shown to be more effective financially and socially than those excluding women (Van Wijk-Sijbesma 1998). However, despite widespread recognition of the importance of women to water and sanitation, women are still excluded from relevant decisions (UN Division for the Advancement of Women 2005). This extends from the public to the private sector: as one example, survey data from the Niger delta indicates that women feel excluded from Exxon-Mobil's stakeholder process there (Idemudia 2009). While gender mainstreaming in corporate and government projects and services has been increasing globally, there is still much academic, political and practitioner work to be done before women are fairly represented in public service provisions of water and sanitation (UNIFEM 2008-9).

**Corporations can negatively affect women, water and sanitation in these ways:**

- ◇ Water pollution that contributes to health problems (either gender-specific or the family);
- ◇ Water pollution that impacts women's livelihoods such as agriculture, fishing, etc.
- ◇ Water pollution that diminishes available supply;
- ◇ Water withdrawals that diminishes access;
- ◇ Increase in the price of water (from privatization, scarcity) that diminishes access;
- ◇ Using land formerly used by women for informal agricultural activities without compensation or replacement;
- ◇ Not providing equal access to credit;
- ◇ And poor oversight of workplaces and policies in the supply chain.

This is where the transnational corporation can help through philanthropy, partnerships, investment and governance. As Ivens (2008) argued, access to water and sanitation does not automatically result in women's empowerment or necessarily reduce working hours. She found that the best available cases for empowerment through water and sanitation access all included a direct focus on improving gender relations, combining water and sanitation access with access to income-generating activities and ensuring women's participation in management. As seen through examples presented later in the paper, TNCs can and do provide such integrated development opportunities for women through both philanthropy and business investments. As many transnational corporations view developing countries as the best opportunity for growth, it is important to take into account these social and environmental investment and development considerations.

**Negative Impacts:** Due to their roles as caretakers and water collectors, women can be uniquely affected by trans-national corporations (TNCs) (Rosenberg 1987). Industrial water pollution is an important part of the WW&S impact spectrum; specific physiological factors such as pregnancy and breastfeeding, as well as social factors such as increased poverty rates, make women more vulnerable to water pollution and degradation (National Network of Environments and Women's Health 2009). Women's traditional water roles include carrying water, agriculture and animal husbandry and laundry. Women thus have several avenues of exposure to pollution. Gendered impacts of chemicals in water has been acknowledged in

both rural and urban contexts (UNDP 2011). This should be a concern for companies producing products that contain or release endocrine disruptors, pesticides and heavy metals into waterways both in rural and urban contexts. Companies can mitigate effects of chemicals on women by completing full environmental and lifecycle assessments of exposure in developing countries. Collecting data, monitoring impacts and informing women of potential risks and how to mitigate them is an essential step in corporate citizenship and managing company risk. This is a growing area of concern and tools exist for companies to engage in this space: one example is the checklist for corporations interested in managing gendered impacts of chemicals designed by the United Nations Development Programme.<sup>5</sup>

Other corporate impacts on WW&S include nuanced economic impacts on communities and regions. For example, the World Bank found that the presence of extractive industries may increase absolute employment numbers but most of these jobs go to men and displace traditional workers (Eftimie et. al 2009). Localized inflation also affects women in their household roles. In some cases, corporation-provided formalized employment that favors men can actually exacerbate gender inequality by reducing women's participation in management (Eftimie et. al 2009). Industrial water pollution also has gendered economic impacts. Globally, women make up a higher percentage of people living in poverty, leaving them more vulnerable to potential income-earning disruptions. For example, a 2001 18-day Shell Oil spill in Ogbodo, Nigeria, affected women's livelihoods of fishing, water and food gathering, palm oil production and medicine-making.<sup>6</sup> In response, Ogbodo women joined with Niger Delta Women for Justice/Friends of the Earth and broadcasted for aid in the NGO community (Turner 2001).

The high water needs of some industries may create local competition and scarcity, such as the infamous 2002 Coca-Cola case in India. Indigenous people surrounding the Coca-Cola plant in Kerala alleged that the plant's groundwater withdrawals of up to 1.5 million liters/day had dried up their wells. The complaint spawned a 49-day protest and demands that Coca-Cola pay for groundwater restoration and water supply for the affected villages. Tribal leader M. Swaminathan highlighted the crisis' burden on women when he said, "Coca Cola has made life miserable for us, for our women. Our women have had to walk nearly one kilometer to get water from a neighboring village, and return in time to get to work" (Jayaraman

<sup>5</sup>For a more thorough discussion of the benefits both to women and communities from including women in WASH, please see Fisher, Julie. 2006. "For Her It's the Big Issue: Putting Women at the Centre of Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene." Freely available for download at <http://www.genderandwater.org/page/5124>.

<sup>6</sup>In the 2001 Shell case, allegations arose that the World Bank fast-tracked a \$15 million loan to Shell to build oil infrastructure in Nigeria, bypassing required environmental and social impact assessments (Friends of the Earth Australia 2001).

<sup>7</sup>International trade policy has also provoked ire amongst many NGOs for gifting significant legal rights to corporate entities with few strings attached. The American Friends Service Committee, for example, objects to the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) for its negative impacts on women and water (American Friends Service Committee 2004). The recent focus on



2002).

Caution must also be used in water privatization and large-scale development projects to account for gender-specific impacts.<sup>7</sup> For example, post-privatization increases in the price of water may lead to inability to pay, which can revert women back to collecting and impact public health. A 2000 cholera outbreak in South Africa was linked to this exact problem: as people were unable to pay for privatized water, they collected water from unclean sources (Marsden 2003). Boycotts and protests sparked by dam-building and pricing increases from privatization have occurred in both developed and developing countries, including Bolivia, Italy, England, the US, Brazil, El Salvador, Costa Rica and the Philippines. Private water companies should ensure women's participation in stakeholder meetings, especially in pricing, to avoid reputational and financial risk and to ensure water access for the poor. This may become standard practice: AquaFed, the international association of private water operators, has endorsed both the Right to Water and women's pivotal role in water management (AquaFed 2007).

**Corporate Opportunities:** Corporations can help solve the crisis through investment in social enterprise, good governance and stakeholder management practices that actively include women, mitigation of gendered negative corporate impacts, philanthropy and corporate enterprise partnerships.<sup>8</sup> As Gavin Power, deputy director of the UN Global Compact and head of the CEO Water Mandate said, "The bottom line is that what is good for communities, for public water management, and for the environment is also in the best interest of companies working to ensure their access to water in the long term" (UN Global Compact 2011). Women are increasingly recognized as vital for development and corporate growth. In that vein, the World Bank, International Finance Corporation and private U.S. banks committed \$885 million to women-owned small and mid-size enterprises over the next three years (World Bank 2011). Corporations are also increasingly aware of the benefits of the so-called triple bottom line of profit, people, and planet (The Economist 2009). Consumers are also increasingly aware of the triple bottom line: a survey of 7000 people in 13 countries by the 2010 Edelman 'goodpurpose' study found that "86 percent of global consumers believe that business needs to place at least equal weight on society's interests as on business' interests." Employees are also seeking responsible workplaces: worker satisfaction is higher in companies with CSR initiatives (GRI 2009).

Corporations have already seen better-than-expected returns on

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water privatization by the World Bank and other entities underscores the potential for gender-specific impacts from global trade and banking agreements. <sup>8</sup>Inclusion in the stakeholder process may mean holding two separate community meetings, obtaining a female leader of the focus group, etc. While corporations are most assuredly following these practices, information is still scarce, presumably because gender data is not yet tracked or shared on a wide scale. A new initiative at UN Women and the UN Global Compact, the Women's Empowerment Principles, may eventually provide useful data through its reporting initiative, although it needs to expand both principles and data-collection to include water and sanitation data. Signatories now include PepsiCo, Petrosbas, For more information on the program, see [http://unglobalcompact.org/docs/issues\\_doc/human\\_rights/Resources/WEP\\_EMB\\_Booklet.pdf](http://unglobalcompact.org/docs/issues_doc/human_rights/Resources/WEP_EMB_Booklet.pdf).

some investments in sustainability initiatives on water and energy in developing countries (Clancy 2010). The potential return is indeed large: the United Nations' 2006 Human Development report estimated a \$38 billion annual benefit to meeting the MDG of halving the global population without access to sanitation and water. Water and sanitation interventions have a return of \$5 to \$28 per dollar invested (Hutton and Haller 2004). By partnering, investing and initiating social enterprise portions of their business, TNCs can drive economic development, corporate returns, and investment in WW&S. Indeed, these initiatives may provide unique access to low-income communities and consumers. As one example, an International Finance Corporation and Harvard study of Coca-Cola's Micro Distribution Centers (MDCs) found that these low-income distributors noted lack of access to water, sanitation, health and education in their communities (Nelson et. al 2009). These MDCs expressed interest in helping their communities access these necessities, providing a possible point of service and education. These social initiatives can be solid investments: Drayton and Budinich (2010) found that partnerships between corporations and social entrepreneurs not only help alleviate social and health problems, they can be highly profitable as well. Coca-Cola is scaling up its MDCs: the initiative is profitable with an estimated \$550 million a year earned

**Corporations can positively affect women, water and sanitation in these ways:**

- ◇ Promoting equitable access and sustainable pricing for women in privatization of water;
- ◇ Investing in water and sanitation access for communities;
- ◇ Ensuring gender mainstreaming in projects and throughout the supply chain;
- ◇ Recognizing women's informal and formal claims on land even when those rights are not recognized culturally or by the government;
- ◇ Investing in women farmers in the supply chain and provide low-interest credit;
- ◇ Monitoring and mitigating gendered impacts of chemicals and pollution;
- ◇ Partnering with NGOs, aid enterprises to create multi-prong water, sanitation, education and work access projects for women;
- ◇ Studying and mitigating impacts from water use and discharges of chemicals or coolant water;
- ◇ Training and hiring women as product distributors, hygiene educators, farmers, and water/sanitation handywomen.

so far in Africa (Yale Journal of International Affairs 2011).

Investing in WW&S has a benefit in project management as well. Survey work from the Niger delta indicates that public-private and private-NGO partnerships are also best managed when the partnership involves a grassroots and community-organized component, such as asking communities to work together to present a prioritized list of concerns (Idemudia 2009). Furthermore, the World Bank notes that an important part of facilitating extractive industries' social license-to-operate includes involving women in the stakeholder process (Eftimie et. al 2009). Corporations can involve water provision in project design and mitigation techniques. As an example, Zauri Cement built a water reservoir and green belt in a former quarry, providing the local community with a rainwater catchment system while restoring the local ecosystem (Chattopadhyay 2009).





Corporations can join collaborative work groups on gender and on water. Several multi-stakeholder initiatives focused on women's economic development exist, such as the Adolescent Girls Initiative, the Global Private Sector Leaders Forum and the Women Business and Law Project. These are public-private partnerships that work to remove barriers to schooling and business for women around the world. Multi-stakeholder initiatives in water include the CEO Water Mandate from the UN Global Compact, the Beverage Industry Environmental Roundtable, the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, among others. Many transnational corporations are involved in several of these initiatives. The following examples involve both corporate investment and public-private partnerships in WW&S from The Coca-Cola Company, Diageo, Unilever and Proctor & Gamble.

*The Coca-Cola Company:* One corporate leader in WW&S and women's empowerment is The Coca-Cola Company. In 2010, Coca-Cola launched the 5x20 initiative, a ten year commitment to break down barriers to business for five million women in and outside the Coca-Cola supply chain. Muhtar Kent, Coca-Cola's CEO, has also committed Coca-Cola to the UN-Women's Women's Empowerment Principles for business.<sup>9</sup> In 2011, it announced the \$30 million RAIN (Replenish Africa Initiative) program to provide water access and WASH education to women and girls. Other initiatives include funding programs in Haiti to include women in fruit farming, and partnering with NGOs, the United Nations and governments around the world. Coca-Cola has also partnered with USAID to fund education of women on water management programs in Tunisia (Shuman 2010).

*Proctor & Gamble:* With improved WW&S access hopefully leading to more discretionary income for women, there is potential for various new markets to emerge. One program from Proctor & Gamble, for example, provides sanitary supplies and facilities to girls in developing countries to help them stay in school (Proctor & Gamble 2011). With higher education levels and potentially a better earning potential, these girls may continue purchasing P&G products.

*Diageo:* Diageo has a dual-pronged investment in Africa: enterprise (Senator Keg)<sup>10</sup> and a CSR, NGO partnership and philanthropy initiative (Water of Life). Water of Life is Diageo's initiative to provide water access for one million people a year until 2015 to help meet

the MDGs. Diageo's enterprise is Senator Keg (now dubbed Obama Beer) which arose out of a partnership with the Kenyan government to create an affordable and safe beer. Prior to this initiative, most alcohol was out of reach of Kenyans' budgets and so kumi kumi, a deadly and illegal homebrew made with antifreeze was widely consumed and caused hundreds of deaths. By using local growers, brewers and distribution networks, Diageo's beer captured market share while employing women as farmers, building capacity, reducing illness and deaths. Diageo is also well-posed to capture market share in Africa's market, which is projected to grow at double-digit rates.

*Unilever:* In developing countries, Unilever also has both social enterprises and partnerships with NGOs to address hygiene and water scarcity. In India, it operates a decentralized distribution model that uses women entrepreneurs, called shaktis, as hygiene educators and product distributors to their social networks (The Economist 2010). Unilever also redesigns products to respond to even the poorest customers: they created the affordable LifeBuoy soap. This branded soap is the linchpin of public-private partnerships that are increasing awareness of hygiene and reducing disease.<sup>11</sup>

These cases highlight that new corporate investment opportunities can be found by partnering with social enterprises and setting up initiatives to reach lower income consumers. Other TNCs in this area also have similar opportunities. For example, in response to the Proctor & Gamble initiative, a new social enterprise was established - the Sustainable Health Enterprise (SHE) in Rwanda. Objecting to the environmental waste of disposable, non-local products, SHE uses leftover local banana fibers to create biodegradable, locally-made menstrual products. The initiative employs local men and women, naturally creating education channels into communities. Partnering with SHE and other local social enterprises could be a great opportunity for P&G and other menstrual product companies to appeal to communities to assist in the creation of localized products that use local labor and materials. TNCs can help with business plans, scale and local training, helping money to stay in local communities and assisting with grassroots capacity building. These partnerships could lead to innovation in materials use, corporate culture and more. Indeed, partnerships may be the best way to manage these social investments: Nwankwo et. al (2007) found that partnerships with community enterprise are the most efficient management and governance tool for international corporations.

Additionally, TNCs can view water and sanitation as an investment in their workforce, productivity and competitiveness. Corporations in emerging markets already have a projected shortfall of talent: Hewlett and Rashid (2009) noted the connection between this shortfall and the need to address cultural barriers to women entering managerial positions to stay competitive. Some corporations, like Siemens, Intel, Ernst and Young, Google and Deutsche Bank,<sup>12</sup> have invested in initiatives to reach female talent and address cultural and institutional barriers preventing them from reaching top positions (Hewlett and Rashid 2009). Millions of women though,

9 This initiative on business and women has been around in one form or another since 2004. It does not include water or sanitation in its principles but does encourage mitigating gendered effects of corporate workplaces. Multi-stakeholder initiatives will be covered more in depth in the second paper in this series to be published in 2013 in wH2O.

10 I learned about this corporate case from a presentation by author Eric Lowitt on University of Pennsylvania's campus from his book *The Future of Value*. Diageo also features information about this on its website.

11 To read more about Unilever's initiatives with LifeBuoy, please see Unilever. 2012. "The Importance of Handwashing." Online at <http://www.hul.co.in/sustainability/casestudies/health-nutrition-hygiene/importanceofhandwashing/default.aspx>.

12 Ernst and Young has signed UN Women's "Women's Empowerment Principles". For a list of other signatories, please see [http://unglobalcompact.org/docs/issues\\_doc/human\\_rights\\_CEO\\_Statement\\_of\\_Support\\_Signatories.pdf](http://unglobalcompact.org/docs/issues_doc/human_rights_CEO_Statement_of_Support_Signatories.pdf).



will not be able to finish secondary school due to lack of water and sanitation. Corporations operating in low access areas will need to invest in community water and sanitation access to enable girls and women to access education and training as well as reduce absenteeism and increase productivity for those women already in the workforce.

**Conclusions and Recommendations:** This paper argues that transnational corporations have much to gain from investment in WW&S. Targeting WW&S is a first-step needed to increase education, productivity and health levels and thus should be a prime target of corporate CSR initiatives, governance and stakeholder initiatives. Corporations should also ensure gender mainstreaming in their recognition and ratification of the human right to water and sanitation and the United Nations Millennium Development Goals in water and sanitation. Quantifiable change can be achieved through gender mainstreaming in stakeholder management, whether that means separate meetings with women or ensuring proportionate representation. This goal might mean starting additional initiatives to educate women on important W&S issues so that they can be full participants in stakeholder meetings. TNCs should also ensure that gender-specific negative impacts of industry are addressed in gender-sensitive ways. Any internal corporate commitments to gender mainstreaming should be monitored and evaluated to track changes, developments and improvements. Industry best practices and lessons learned should also be shared through case studies and multi-stakeholder initiatives. Coca-Cola, Unilever, Diageo and Proctor & Gamble's WW&S initiatives may provide the best examples of what TNCs can do through hygiene education and multi-targeted initiatives in farming and water management. Their interests may be altruistic, but there are also business interests at stake in providing WW&S access. Development, after all, also benefits TNCs because they may gain additional consumers through communities' increased discretionary income from increased productivity from better hygiene, sanitation and health. Removing the barrier to further development through WW&S access is therefore a smart investment both financially as a market builder and reputation enhancer, and socially as a corporate citizen. Relieving women of the burden of disease and fetching water provides them with additional time that can be dedicated to schooling or employment or simply better livelihoods. A healthier community leads to more productive workers and more stability. Further research remains to be done empirically and theoretically to evaluate the few corporate initiatives in WW&S that exist and examine the impacts and return on the investments over a long period of time.

Combining WW&S initiatives with capacity building will help elevate an entire class of people and contribute to the development goals enshrined in the MDGs. This issue will only escalate in importance because without intervention, the burden of water collection on women may only worsen due to increasing water scarcity from increased water consumption and climate change impacts. Trans-national corporations have benefits to gain, financially and socially, by investing in WW&S. The cases in this paper highlight a

few ways of how innovative corporations have invested in this space; more research and development is needed to expand on these successes and investigate effectiveness of different types of programs, returns of investment and the best private-public sector or private-NGO partnerships.

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***As leaders of business organizations we recognize that the private sector has an important stake in helping to address the water challenge faced by the world today.***  
—preamble, CEO Water mandate